



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending

MERLE R. WILSON
DAMAGE CONTROLMAN FIREMAN
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

“For courageous conduct while serving in the Engineering Department on board the U.S.S. BENNINGTON (CVA-20) when that vessel experienced a series of violent explosions while conducting air operations seventy-five miles south of Newport, Rhode Island, on 26 May 1954. With fires, dense smoke and intense heat spreading throughout the forward section of the ship and causing death or injury to 220 officers and men, WILSON immediately donned an oxygen breathing apparatus and fought his way through the center of the devastated area to assist in the rescue of casualties. On one occasion he voluntarily made his way down a darkened, slippery escape hatch to the sixth deck and found several trapped men in the Damage Control Central area. After carrying one man up the escape hatch to safety, he returned with additional rescue personnel to aid in the removal of the rest. By his outstanding courage and initiative throughout, WILSON contributed materially to the saving of several lives. His actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

The Commendation Ribbon is authorized.

C. S. Thomas
Secretary of the Navy

USS-BENNINGTON.ORG